

# Parents Provide. Kids Decide.



*Parents and children have their own jobs to do when it comes to feeding. Parents decide what to eat, when to eat, and where to eat. Children decide how much to eat or whether to eat at all.*

## Parents Provide: What to eat

**Serve a variety of healthy foods.** Young children enjoy feeding themselves, so expect them to eat with their hands and to make a mess. Set a good example by eating a variety of food yourself.

**Offer new foods with old favorites.** If a new food is refused, don't make a fuss. Young children may need 10 to 15 exposures to a new food before they decide whether they like it. Try it again later.

**Prepare the same foods for everyone in your family.** You can respect your child's food likes and dislikes without having to cook something different for her.

## Parents Provide: When to eat

**Serve regular meals and snacks.** Young children need to eat every two to three hours. Try to have meals and snacks at about the same time every day.

**Serve milk at meals and snacks.** Offer water when your child is thirsty between meals. She will eat better if you serve milk and juice for meals and snacks instead of letting her drink all day long.

**Let your child eat only at meal and snack times.** Young children should not help themselves to food and drink from the cupboard or refrigerator. This interferes with their appetite at mealtimes and is not good for their teeth.

## Parents Provide: Where to eat

**Have your child sit at the table for meals and snacks.** This helps her focus on eating.

**Make mealtime a family time.** Sit down and eat with your child. Turn off the TV and videos and enjoy talking with your family. Mealtimes should be pleasant for everyone.

## Children Decide: How much to eat

**Let your child choose from the foods offered.** Your job is done when you select and prepare the food. Relax if she eats only a few of the foods served. If your child is growing well and full of energy, don't worry about how much she is eating.

**Expect your child's appetite to vary from day to day.** Some days your child may not eat at all or eat only a bite or two of a few foods. On other days, she will eat everything served. Trust your child to eat. Continue offering a variety of healthy foods, and she will eat when hungry.

***Remember let your child eat what and how much she wants from what you provide for her.***

*Adapted with permission from the Iowa WIC Program.*



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